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Sixtieth session
Agenda items 62 and 63

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2005
New York, 29 June-27 July 2005
Agenda item 14
Social and human rights questions

Identical letters dated 24 August 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to inform you of the Doha International Conference on Ageing, which was held in Doha, Qatar, from 4 to 6 April 2005. This Conference was a manifestation of the State of Qatar's ongoing concern for its elderly population, which occupies a privileged position in Qatari society. The Declaration of the Conference is attached (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 63 and 64, as well as of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda item 14.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

05-52240 (E) 280905 300905

Annex to the identical letters dated 24 August 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council

[Original: Arabic]

Declaration of the Doha International Conference on Ageing in View of Present-Day Changes

Doha, 4 to 6 April 2005

Under the generous sponsorship Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and wife of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the beloved Emir of Qatar, the State of Qatar hosted the first international conference on older persons, the Doha International Conference on Ageing in View of Present-Day Changes.

Doha, the capital, was the venue of this splendid event, which took place from 4 to 6 April 2005. The purpose of the Conference was to gain awareness of the principal field studies and analyse the most important statistical data and international, regional and national legislation with a view to arriving at a set of scientific indicators and concrete recommendations for bridging the generational knowledge gap and achieving communication and fruitful human-resource utilization for the elderly under conditions of comprehensive care and in accordance with standards of excellence stipulated by the laws and the related social and insurance regulations. Such care requires the adoption of a strategy based on mainstreaming concern for the elderly in cultural dialogue and media discourse as well as in educational curricula. This will help the world to shift from an attitude of dealing with the issues of the elderly as sensitive matters towards one of positive intervention in those issues, in line with the social transformations taking place today that are constantly affecting lifestyles. Such new attitudes will be reflected in the ways in which one deals with this important segment of our societies.

Accordingly, the Conference was intended to sensitize the international community to the need to formulate a realistic, forward-looking vision to ensure the continuity of the relationship of older persons with their societies. Such a vision must comprise a well-defined strategy and clear concepts of the sharing of that segment of the population in community development efforts in every way, through the adoption of methodological frameworks derived from the overall findings of the studies and research carried out in senior citizens and from the results of local, regional and international experience in the area of participation of this group in development and its care.

Fortunately, the various Conference participants reached out in order to draw, from among the lofty principles vouchsafed in the revealed religions, the principle of desiring to instil a spirit of love, appreciation, reverence and piety in the souls of the members of each generation towards their parents and older persons.

As the Conference looked at the concrete application of those principles, there emerged a universal vision confirming both the importance of recognizing the need to accord older persons a prominent status and the importance of respecting and

taking advantage of their experience and knowledge. This can only be achieved through efforts to effect a major change in the lives of older persons so as to turn to take advantage of their profound experience. This means a new role for them in society that implies providing work opportunities for all who so desire and exercising the necessary concern and care, so as to eliminate the factors that tend to marginalize this group.

In the light of what has been said and in full recognition of all the international covenants that have dealt with ageing, the Conference set about shedding light on the main contexts of care and concern for the elderly and their participation in development.

The Conference participants discussed the following principal components:

I. Religion

This component involved an examination of the guidelines set forth in the holy scriptures of the principal revealed religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this connection it was recommended that international and regional bodies and organizations should strive to arrive at an all-inclusive formulation of existing covenants on the elderly that should include the consecration of religious values, moral teachings and life experience relating to their care and respect for them.

II. The social component

Under this theme the Conference discussed the most important principles and the fundamental rights and freedoms that represent the pillars of an all-inclusive society — a society for all ages — in which the elderly participate fully and effectively, without any discrimination and on an equal footing with all other segments of the population, and from which anything that might stand in the way of their participation in all facets and activities of the community or constitute discrimination against them has been eliminated.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of adopting every possible measure to support and strengthen the bonds and solidarity between the various social groups through equality and reciprocity between generations.

III. Health

The most important health issues facing elderly persons around the world were highlighted under this heading. A number of regional health problems were discussed and the importance of efforts towards publishing a journal of gerontology/geriatrics in all the countries and specialized academies of the world was emphasized, as well as the need to establish a medical policy geared towards early detection of geriatric diseases with a view to their prevention.

IV. Culture and the media

This component showed the historical dimensions of the care of and regard for older persons in Arab culture and in other cultures throughout the world. It revealed the outstanding intellectual contributions of elderly persons of learning in the countries of the world. Emphasis here was on issues relating to age as reflected in television dramas and television broadcasts intended for the elderly.

There has been a world-wide call for the creation of what is referred to as a senior citizens' culture and media, which aims, through educational and information means, to fill the cultural needs of this group and entertain them with literary and artistic works that are apposite to their concerns, their education and their culture.

V. Legislation

This theme was the subject of a discussion of social policy on the elderly, social insurance laws and their role in providing care for elderly persons.

International and regional organizations and bodies urged the carrying out of advanced studies and comprehensive, periodic reviews of the prevailing systems of social security with a view to broadening the range of individuals benefiting from them and furthering the rights and advantages guaranteed by them. They also drew attention to the need to create a common global formula for the fundamental principles of social security to guarantee the abolition of poverty among the elderly by ensuring a minimum periodic income with stepped increases, to make it possible to meet the demands of a life of dignity.

Final recommendations of the Declaration

The Conference participants call for:

1. The preparation of a comprehensive study with a view to a common global formulation to serve as a basis for international covenants concerning older persons, guaranteeing the consecration of religious and moral values that call for the care of and respect for such persons;

2. Efforts to correct and modify negative attitudes in the direction of a concept of old age not as reflecting weakness or incapacity but rather as an important stage in the life of a human being that is distinguished by maturity and wisdom and represents a cultural patrimony which links generations and elevates societies;

3. The establishment of care programmes, policies and plans that contribute to the preparation of a supportive environment for older persons that promotes their integration within their families, their social environment and public life;

4. Efforts to ensure that the elderly person continues to live among the members of his or her family and is provided with necessary means for a life of dignity amid the warmth of the family and the intimate rapport that ties its members together;

5. The conducting of an advanced study of social insurance systems, to be published internationally, with a view to making the retirement age optional, based on the nature of the work concerned; abolishing the prohibition against combined pension entitlement and income from work; and eliminating all kinds of discrimination based on sex, ancestry, language or religion with regard to the enjoyment of retirement pensions, social security and other types of insurance;

6. Concern with the establishment of medical units for physical, mental and social geriatric health both in faculties of medicine and in psychology, social and social-services departments in Arab and other universities throughout the world, to

contribute towards enhancing the provision of the various services offered to elderly persons;

7. A focus on the literary work of elderly persons that records their invaluable experience and expertise and expresses what they have undergone in various literary forms, such as the short story, the novel, plays, poetry, etc.;

8. Concern with recording the biographies of elderly persons who have made outstanding contributions;

9. The development of a culture of friendship with the elderly and encouragement of intimate human relations between young people and children and elderly persons;

10. The establishment of a media plan for dramatic productions relating to the elderly to address and respond to their needs and deal with their issues and problems; deepen the awareness of society of the importance of caring for the elderly; reject all kinds of negative attitudes towards them that may exist within the community; embody a positive image of the elderly as a group representing wisdom, experience and noble traditional values; and depict them as citizens actively participating in the affairs of their families and their societies;

11. A review of educational curricula and school books at all stages of learning, especially at the primary-school level, in order to bring out clearly the positive aspects of old age and tie it to earlier stages of a person's life as being a stage characterized by maturity and experience;

12. The expansion of educative courses and programmes and concern with providing the requisite information for embarking upon the phase of early preparation for retirement and old age based on the adoption of healthy habits and sound means of prevention, in accordance with clearly defined methods, in order to afford elderly persons an opportunity for appropriate preparation and planning for the transition to that stage of life without, or in any case with a minimum of, adverse repercussions;

13. A study of the cultural needs of the elderly and attention to providing for those needs in a way that enables them to benefit fully therefrom through the provision of the necessary appliances and equipment for enhancing their moving, hearing and seeing capacities;

14. Efforts to create effective means of cooperation and coordination between organizations that operate in the field of care for senior citizens and concerned entities in cultural and artistic forums, public libraries, clubs and associations in order that those entities may qualify and train specialists in understanding older persons, recognizing and fulfilling their various cultural needs and providing library, cultural and information services to them wherever they may be, whether at home, in senior care facilities or in hospitals;

15. The establishment of model scientific institutes and foundations to carry out research and studies in the field of geriatrics; to establish medical policies aimed at disease prevention in the elderly; and to qualify and train senior medical and social staff and their assistants in admitting and providing medical and social care services of all kinds to elderly subjects, administering treatment and managing physical and mental health problems in this group;

16. The establishment of information centres; the building of databases on all matters relating to ageing, which can be updated and upgraded from time to time so as to remain abreast of new developments around the world; and their connection to regional information networks;

17. Initiatives towards the inclusion of geriatrics in the curricula of medical schools in Arab countries and elsewhere throughout the world;

18. The conducting of specialized studies and research to determine the characteristics of diseases of the elderly in the different regions of the world and the features of the services which must be provided for them. Of considerable importance here is the need to study and improve the process of evaluating the effects of chronic diseases on elderly subjects who suffer from them as well as on members of their families;

19. The establishment and adoption of strict, specific controls and conditions for placing elderly persons in nursing homes, permitting them to be discharged whenever it is better for them either from the social standpoint or for reasons of health;

20. The establishment of rehabilitation programmes for elderly persons with disabilities to afford them the minimum personal capacities required for their insertion into society, within a physical environment that facilitates their movements both at home and outside;

21. Efforts to ensure that the senior citizens are granted special privileges that guarantee their ability to travel from country to country at the lowest possible cost;

22. The granting to seniors of exemptions and facilities that relieve them of the burden of taxes and rates in all areas.

And in conclusion ...

We address to the world at large, with all its organizations and institutions, an appeal for:

- The drafting of a universal declaration of the rights of the elderly in line with the international instruments containing universal declarations of the rights of the child and of women, to be promulgated on the International Day of Older Persons, all countries being invited to adopt it on that day. Additional protocols must be drafted to codify international means, binding on States, for achieving social justice for this group. Social policies must be adopted to prepare the world's peoples to welcome and include the elderly in development programmes, guaranteeing that they are not subject to any form of neglect, mistreatment, violence or marginalization;
- The adoption of 7 April 2006 (World Health Day) as Senior Sports Day, in view of the major role played by sports in health.

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Sixtieth session
Agenda item 132
Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the management audit of the regional commissions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/271 of 23 December 2004, in which the Assembly took note of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on its audit of the regional commissions and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixtieth session on actions taken by the legislative bodies of the regional commissions with regard to the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/271 of 23 December 2004, in which the Assembly took note of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on its audit of the regional commissions (A/58/785) and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixtieth session on actions taken by the legislative bodies of the regional commissions with regard to those recommendations.

2. In recent years, the regional dimension of the work of the United Nations has received considerable impetus. One milestone was the recognition by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/46, annex III, of the dual role played by regional commissions, namely as regional outposts of the United Nations and as important parts of their respective regional institutional landscape. In that resolution, the Council welcomed the reform measures undertaken by the regional commissions and encouraged them to continue to undertake, as appropriate, under the aegis of their respective intergovernmental bodies, further measures in that regard. It also recognized that each regional commission operates in a different economic and institutional environment and that regional commissions should therefore continue to respond to regional needs as reflected in the priorities set by members of the respective commissions.

3. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions cooperated closely with the Office of Internal Oversight Services during its management audits of the regional commissions. Moreover, they also undertook follow-up action on all recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. They transmitted recommendations requiring decisions by intergovernmental bodies to the commissions at their recent sessions, or brought them to the attention of the respective members States (see follow-up action reported under recommendation 3).

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

4. The New York office of the regional commissions, with the guidance of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, should make its annual report, entitled "Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields", more succinct. That would facilitate the discussion by the Economic and Social Council of the linkages among the work of the regional commissions and other United Nations entities in the economic and social sectors. The report should specifically highlight the policy and coordination issues for the Council's consideration. In that regard, section IV of the report (which summarizes the executive secretaries' discussions on common issues of interest) should be moved to the beginning of the report. Moreover, the introduction of the report should include, for the Council's consideration and approval, proposals relating to policy coherence and cooperation among the regional commissions themselves and among the regional commissions and other related United Nations entities (A/58/785, para. 67).

5. The report presented to the Economic and Social Council in 2005 (E/2005/15) was more succinct and substantially shorter than the previous report of 2004 (E/2004/15). The report nonetheless covers various issues of concern to the Council, such as follow-up action by the five regional commissions, and actually combines

three separate reports mandated by the Council. The section that summarizes the issues discussed at the meetings of the executive secretaries has been moved to the beginning of the report as from 2004. The linkages among regional commissions and between the commissions and other partners were explored in the reports submitted to the Council as from 1999, but have been included under one section since 2004.

Recommendation 2

6. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions should request the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which services the Economic and Social Council, to propose that the Council move its discussions relating to the regional commissions from its general segment to a special segment, with a day dedicated to incorporating the regional perspectives into the wide-ranging issues being considered at a global intergovernmental forum. In addition, the regional commissions' participation should include the executive secretaries and representatives of the regional intergovernmental mechanisms, such as chairpersons of the regional commissions or other nominated representatives. Participation in preparatory meetings for the special and high-level segments would also enhance the regional commissions' dialogue with the Economic and Social Council (ibid., para. 69).

7. In its decision 2004/323 of 11 November 2004, the Economic and Social Council decided to hold a dialogue with the executive secretaries immediately after the high-level segment and to assess the implementation of the decision in 2008 in the context of its resolution 1998/46, annex III, and General Assembly resolution 57/270 B. The first such dialogue, held on 5 July 2005, following the high-level segment of the Council and entitled "Achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration: a regional perspective", generated great interest among delegations and resulted in a fruitful exchange of views on a wide range of issues, with special focus on the regional dimension of the theme topic for the high-level segment.

8. The scheduling of the dialogue between the executive secretaries and the Council immediately after the high-level segment also enabled the executive secretaries to participate in the high-level segment and the events organized around it.

9. Through the Regional Commissions New York Office, the regional commissions continue to participate in the preparatory meetings for Council sessions.

Recommendation 3

10. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions should undertake an overall reassessment of their intergovernmental machinery to streamline the processes and avoid duplication. Recommendations to revitalize and support those entities that could be useful and a change in the focus of others that have been inactive should be presented to the member States for their consideration. The executive secretaries should specifically review the overall coherence and effectiveness of their respective intergovernmental bodies, with particular emphasis on: (i) standardizing rules and procedures for the establishment of those bodies (including subsidiary bodies); (ii) regularly reviewing and monitoring participation

by members of the regional commissions; (iii) clarifying mandates to avoid overlap among different bodies; (iv) revisiting mandates of non-functioning bodies; (v) aligning those bodies and the substantive divisions servicing them; and (vi) regularly reporting and following up on the recommendations made by intergovernmental bodies. The results of that review should be included in the report on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields. That would allow for an integrated view of the impact of intergovernmental bodies in the various regions and facilitate the exchange of best practices among all the regional commissions (ibid., para. 71).

11. With a view to facilitating the exchange of experiences and best practices as well as to improving overall coherence and effectiveness, the meetings of the executive secretaries and those of the chiefs of programme planning of the regional commissions frequently review the intergovernmental structures of their respective commissions, including their realignment (when necessary) with regional priorities.

12. The results of the recent review of the intergovernmental structures of regional commissions will be included in the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields, to be submitted to the Council in 2006.

13. The specific measures taken by the regional commissions in response to recommendation 3 are set out below.

Economic Commission for Europe

14. A comprehensive review of the state of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has been undertaken by external evaluators engaged by the Commission. A copy of the Office of Internal Oversight Services report was given to the team of external evaluators. The review includes the functioning of the intergovernmental structure of ECE. The final report of the external evaluators, issued July 2005, contains recommendations that the Commission will consider and decide upon at an ad hoc session.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

15. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) undertook a comprehensive review of the conference, programme and secretariat structures in 2001, which provided a framework for their realignment with the themes of reducing poverty, managing globalization and emerging social issues. In May 2002, the Commission adopted the new programme and conference structure, an action later endorsed by the General Assembly in December 2002. At its sixty-first session, in May 2005, the Commission noted with appreciation the progress made by the secretariat with conference restructuring, and as a result of a mid-term review of the functioning of the conference structure decided to further amend the subsidiary structure of the Commission as from 2006. The Commission will conduct a comprehensive review of the conference structure and will consider the possibility of further revisions at its sixty-third session.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

16. By its resolution 603 (XXX), entitled "ECLAC calendar of conferences for the period 2004-2006" and adopted on 2 July 2004, the Economic Commission for Latin

America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) decided to maintain the current intergovernmental structure and the existing pattern of meetings, and approved the calendar of conferences of the Commission for the period 2004-2006.

Economic Commission for Africa

17. The review undertaken in 2004 included an assessment of the intergovernmental machinery of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). At its thirty-seventh session (21 and 22 May 2004), the Commission also recommended an expanded role for member States in priority-setting. In preparing the proposed 2006-2007 programme budget, the recommendations of the intergovernmental machinery were reviewed and incorporated into the work programme. The sectoral committees also reviewed the proposed work programme of the respective divisions before its finalization so as to ensure greater alignment between mandates and the relevant subprogrammes, including the work of the substantive divisions.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

18. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the management audit of the regional commissions was circulated to member countries. At its twenty-third session (Damascus, 9-12 May 2005), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) noted the status of implementation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services recommendations. It is currently conducting an overall assessment of the coherence and effectiveness of existing intergovernmental bodies. It is envisaged that the results of the assessment will be presented to the Commission at its twenty-fourth session, to be held in 2006.

Recommendation 4

19. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions should ensure that the calendars of their annual/biennial sessions are harmonized with the submissions of the biennial programme plan (a component of the strategic framework) or the proposed programme budgets to the Headquarters Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts (ibid., para. 73).

Economic Commission for Europe

20. ECE sessions are held annually and scheduled to precede the submission of both the biennial programme plan and the proposed programme budget to Headquarters.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

21. Commission sessions are held annually and are harmonized to precede the submission of both the biennial programme plan and the proposed programme budget to Headquarters.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

22. With the adoption of the new biennial cycle of the Strategic Framework, the calendar of ECLAC sessions in even years is harmonized with the submission of the biennial programme plan and the proposed programme budget to Headquarters. In the case of the proposed programme budget, the Commission also adopts the logical

framework of the biennial plan already developed to the output level as an input for the preparation of the proposed programme budget later during the same year (between September and November of even years).

Economic Commission for Africa

23. Commission sessions are held annually and are scheduled to precede the submission of both the biennial programme plan and the proposed programme budget to Headquarters.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

24. The Commission agreed to the proposal of the secretariat of holding its sessions in even years as from 2006. The secretariat had proposed the change in the timing of ministerial sessions to even years so as to facilitate the Commission's review of the draft strategic framework. Subsidiary intergovernmental bodies of the Commission will review the draft programme of work pertaining to their subprogrammes.

Recommendation 5

25. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions should agree on a common policy with respect to self-evaluations so that: (i) evaluation approaches and procedures can be harmonized, especially with respect to the planning and selection of the entity to be evaluated, the scope of the evaluation, its methodology, conclusions, timing and costs; (ii) their cycle and depth are sufficient to cover all the programmes of work and their component parts periodically; and (iii) the recommendations arising out of those evaluations may be monitored and reported to the executive secretaries in order to achieve specific process improvements. In accordance with the guidance provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on programme monitoring and reporting, self-evaluation findings should be incorporated into the regular reporting under the results-based-budgeting framework (ibid., para. 75).

26. Self-evaluations are conducted on a regular basis by the commissions in accordance with the programme performance reporting guidelines provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Self-evaluation issues are being actively reviewed at the meetings of the chiefs of programme planning, in which the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Budget Division are invited to participate. The outcome of the meetings on self-evaluation are to be reported to the joint meetings of the executive secretaries. Self-evaluation findings for the biennium 2004-2005 are being incorporated into regular reporting under the results-based-budgeting framework.

Recommendation 6

27. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that in the area of fund-raising, there should be a focal point within each regional commission to: (i) follow up on all fund-raising meetings, contacts and activities; (ii) coordinate, prepare and follow up on the pledging conference; (iii) maintain a database of all projects in need of fund-raising; (iv) prepare a quarterly report on the progress of fund-raising activities for the executive secretaries, with circulation to all divisional heads; and

(v) exchange best practices and lessons learned in fund-raising efforts (ibid., para. 77).

28. The regional commissions exchange information, including lessons learned, among themselves. The third meeting of chiefs of the programme planning of regional commissions, which will be hosted by ESCWA from 19 to 21 September 2005, will further address this issue.

Economic Commission for Europe

29. The chief of the Technical Cooperation Unit is the focal point for fund-raising and related activities in ECE, which has also adopted a new technical cooperation strategy that includes a component for improving fund-raising by ECE and for ensuring appropriate follow-up to any activity in that area.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

30. The Programme Management Division is the focal point for fund-raising and related activities in ESCAP. It is responsible for fund-raising meetings and activities, coordination of pledging, maintenance of a technical cooperation database, reporting and sharing lessons learned with other regional commissions.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

31. The Deputy Executive Secretary, with the support of the chief of the Project Management Unit of the Programme Planning and Operations Division, is the focal point in the area of fund-raising of ECLAC.

Economic Commission for Africa

32. The Executive Secretary, as primary fund-raiser for the Commission, is assisted and supported by a principal adviser who is responsible for ECA partnership activities and provides the follow-up on all fund-raising meetings, contacts and activities. The chief of Trust Funds and the Project Management Unit prepares and follows up on the pledging conference and funding agreements reached with bilateral and multilateral donors and maintains a database of all projects in need of fund-raising and for which funds have been received. The Trust Funds Unit also prepares a quarterly report on trust fund activities for the Executive Secretary, with circulation to all divisional heads. To enhance the management of its trust funds and extend its funding base, the Commission has undertaken a number of missions to the World Bank and some United Nations offices with substantial extrabudgetary resources, such as the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to share experience and adopt best practices in fund-raising and overall trust fund management.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

33. The Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division is the focal point for fund-raising and the preparation of project portfolios for consideration by potential donors. ESCWA has developed a new technical cooperation strategy for the period 2005-2007, which addresses the key fund-raising issues identified by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. During its twenty-third ministerial session the

Commission reviewed and approved the technical cooperation strategy. Quarterly reporting on the progress of fund-raising was initiated in the second quarter of 2005.

Recommendation 7

34. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions should exchange best practices with respect to the recruitment of regional advisers, the development of workplans and the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of all regional advisory activities, so that their respective regional advisory services can be better integrated into their substantive divisions' work programmes and thereby achieve maximum thematic impact (ibid., para. 79).

35. The meetings of the executive secretaries periodically review issues relating to regional advisers. Best practices were exchanged at the meeting of the chiefs of programme planning of the regional commissions, held in Santiago in October 2004, and the outcome was conveyed to the meeting of the executive secretaries. For example, ESCAP is continuing to implement a results-based approach to regional advisory services to increase demonstrable impact. This includes the adoption of results-based workplans (with performance indicators and clear linkages to subprogramme expected accomplishments, and results-based mission proposals (with reference to common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework) and reporting (available to all ESCAP staff through a regional adviser database). ESCAP has shared these experiences with other regional commissions and the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs entities through the process of preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account (A/59/397) and at the meeting of heads of programme planning and budget divisions of regional commissions in Santiago.

36. For its part, ECA, following the recent review of the regular programme of technical cooperation undertaken by the Secretary-General, has reviewed and updated the operational guidelines governing the management of technical cooperation activities. As part of the strategic plan for 2006-2007, ECA has also put in place an improved mechanism for prioritizing technical cooperation activities.

37. In addition to the new technical cooperation strategy, ESCWA is currently updating its regional advisory services policy guidelines according to best practices and lessons learned as shared by other United Nations entities, including the other regional commissions. ESCWA had already decentralized the substantive management of the work of regional advisers from the then Technical Cooperation Division to the chiefs of the substantive divisions in 1999. That approach has produced better results in harmonizing the work of regional advisers and substantive divisions and in enhancing programme results.

Recommendation 8

38. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Africa should review whether the re-establishment of separate statistics divisions, with a minimum critical mass of statisticians, would strengthen their statistical strategy and outputs and better guarantee methodological standards in their respective regions. An exchange of best practices among the regional commissions could contribute to that assessment (ibid., para. 81).

Economic Commission for Africa

39. A number of steps have been taken to strengthen the statistics function at ECA. They include the establishment of the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa and the Forum on African Statistical Development, and the preparation of an overall strategic framework for African statistical development over the next decade (i.e. from 2005 to 2014). ECA is planning to establish a centre for statistics and to launch a number of field projects to enhance national capacities to implement the System of National Accounts 1993 and to develop basic data, including household, poverty and gender statistics.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

40. Based on the recommendation of the twenty-first ministerial session, the management of subprogramme 6 (Comparable statistics for improved planning and decision-making) was decentralized in early 2003 in order to strengthen the statistics subprogramme and eliminate duplication.

41. In its audit of ESCWA in 2004 and after taking into consideration the response of the Commission on the matter, the Office of Internal Oversight Services recommended that ESCWA evaluate the effects of the decentralization of the Statistics Division. In response to that recommendation, the chiefs of substantive divisions and team leaders were requested to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the decentralization of the Statistics Division. The responses, which were discussed in several cabinet meetings, confirmed that the majority was in favour of maintaining the decentralized structure.

42. ESCWA further consulted with the Programme Planning and Budget Division and the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the matter. The former recommended consolidating staff and non-staff resources under the statistical subprogramme. In line with that recommendation, ESCWA proceeded to pool the resources under subprogramme 6, in close consultation with the substantive divisions. Moreover, it was agreed that a senior statistician would ensure the efficient management of ESCWA statistical activities. The main purpose of the realignment was to: (i) maintain statistical expertise within substantive divisions (as recommended by the majority of statisticians, chiefs of division and team leaders); (ii) ensure the proper management and monitoring of statistical activities by pooling the resources under subprogramme 6; and (iii) optimize the use of resources for statistical activities.

43. The Programme Planning and Budget Division has realigned the resources for statistics and issued a revised allotment for 2005, taking into account that ESCWA had already reflected that approach in the programme budget submission for the biennium 2006-2007.

44. ESCWA reported to the Office of Internal Oversight Services on 13 January 2005 on the completion of the exercise.

Recommendation 9

45. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions should establish a mechanism for: (i) assessing the quality of publications; (ii) categorizing a publication as a "flagship"; (iii) harmonizing the timing of the issuance of flagship publications; (iv) implementing peer-review exercises; (v) assessing the

composition of the readership; and (vi) exchanging best practices and lessons learned. That could enable the regional commissions to improve the dissemination of information to their respective regions, improve access to their publications and standardize policies for the downloading of their documents (ibid., para. 83).

Economic Commission for Europe

46. Assessing and improving the quality of publications is an ongoing task for ECE. Further consultations and efforts will continue in that direction. ECE has established a clearance procedure aimed at ensuring the quality of reports and publications, as well as a group responsible for their planning.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

47. In 2002, a comprehensive evaluation of publications was carried out, resulting in a plan of action to improve the planning, production, processing and dissemination of ESCAP publications. Measures were implemented to streamline the publications programme to reduce their number (for example, publications with weak linkages to priority programme areas were eliminated). Other publications were consolidated into thematic volumes, with some disseminated electronically in lieu of printed format. Through the streamlining process, ESCAP reduced the number of publications by 47 per cent.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

48. The Commission carries out quality assessments of its publications through online surveys, monitoring hits on the website and feedback received at meetings and by other means. In 2004, the ECLAC Publications Committee created a task group to prepare a review of the policy for flagship publications. In February 2005, the task group presented the Publications Committee with a document addressing the issues of periodicity, harmonization of the timing of the issuance and quality standards of flagship publications. ECLAC publication teams cross-read and discuss flagship documents, chapter by chapter. For the "Libros de la CEPAL" collection, the Publications Committee always assigns an internal or external peer reviewer to evaluate work. The ECLAC Publications Committee has commissioned a feasibility assessment of focus group studies in countries of the region to obtain a more accurate assessment of the readership. There have been some initial exchanges among the focal points for publications of the regional commissions.

Economic Commission for Africa

49. The Commission has reconstituted the Publications Committee to look into the issues raised by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and to oversee publications. Its main functions will be to: (a) categorize the types of publications; (b) implement peer-review mechanisms; (c) help harmonize the timing of issuance of flagship publications of regional commissions; and (d) ensure compliance with recommended publication types, characteristics and requirements. In 2004, significant progress was achieved in peer reviewing of ECA flagship publications.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

50. The "Guide to ESCWA conference and publishing services" (E/ESCWA/CSS/2003/2/Rev.1) informs the staff of the secretariat on all aspects

involved in the production of publications. A draft guide to ESCWA publications will be posted on the ESCWA Intranet with a view to further enhancing and improving it. Four ESCWA publications have been designated as flagship publications. Starting in the biennium 2006-2007, those publications will be reviewed by a group of experts with a view to ensuring their relevance and quality. The other publications will be subjected to internal peer reviews for quality assurance. The secretariat has already commenced the implementation of internal peer-review mechanisms in the present biennium. The executive secretaries of the five regional commissions hold regular consultations on issues relating to flagship publications and improvement in information dissemination. Recommendations arising from those meetings are implemented by ESCWA. Continued consultation is envisaged. ESCWA is currently assessing the publications produced from 2002 to 2004; in this connection, it has exchanged information on publications activity with ESCAP, ECE and ECLAC. The outcome of this exercise will be shared with the other regional commissions.

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Security Council
Sixtieth year

Identical letters dated 23 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the recent developments in the conflict zone in the Tskhinvali region of Georgia, issued in the Tbilisi on 22 September 2005 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, under item 97 (t), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

05-52819 (E) 290905

Annex to the identical letters dated 23 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

22 September 2005

On 20 September 2005, the Tskhinvali separatist authorities held a celebration of the "independence" of the self-proclaimed republic of South Ossetia and conducted a military parade.

The military parade gave a display of military detachments and armoured vehicles, including three self-propelled howitzers (2S1), four tanks (T-55), four armoured personnel carriers (BTR-70), three armoured combat vehicles (BMP-2), three 120mm mortars and three anti-aircraft guns (ZU-23-2).

The above-mentioned represents a gross violation of the basic documents of the peace process — namely, the 1992 Sochi Agreement, the 2004 agreement reached at the meeting between Georgian Prime Minster Zurab Zhvania and South Ossetian de facto leader Eduard Kokoity and the decisions of the Joint Control Commission. This fact was negatively appraised by the OSCE Mission to Georgia as well.

A display of heavy armaments and armoured vehicles that are limited by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is a major violation of the main provisions and principles of the CFE Treaty, a cornerstone of European security, thus negatively affecting the situation in the region.

Representatives of the separatist regimes of Abkhazia, Transniestria and Nagorno Karabakh participated in the "festive" events. Most regrettably, members of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, mainly from the ruling party, representatives of the central and regional executive authorities, including leaders of the federal agencies, and high-ranking religious leaders also took part in this masquerade and demonstration of force. All these persons violated the State border of Georgia and entered Georgian territory without proper visas.

Taking into consideration the commitment of the Russian Federation to perform the role of principal mediator in the settlement of conflict in the Tskhinvali region of Georgia and to be the guarantor of peace agreements reached, the appearance of the Russian representatives at the side of the Tskhinvali de facto authorities clearly indicates their unveiled support for the separatist regime. Furthermore, despite Georgia's numerous protests, the Russian side continues providing armaments and ammunition to the separatists.

This behaviour is a flagrant violation of universally recognized norms and principles, as well as bilateral multilateral commitments undertaken by the Russian Federation, and infringes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.

At the same time, the leadership of Russian peacekeeping forces is merely observing the movements of heavy armoured vehicles in the conflict zone. Instead of opposing these activities, the peacekeeping contingent is busy escorting and providing security for the "guests" hastening to attend the "anniversary

celebrations". Indeed, the arming of separatists, unrestricted movement of illegal armed groups, criminals and smuggled goods, abduction of people on a daily basis and other grave criminal activities in the conflict zone happen with their support. All of the above-mentioned is in blatant violation of the mandate of the peacekeeping forces, calling into question the entire issue of the expediency of their presence in the conflict zone.

In addition, the leadership of the peacekeeping forces makes absolutely irresponsible statements and heaps ungrounded accusations on the Georgian side.

The Government of Georgia has repeatedly stressed that the existence of illicit arms in the conflict zones is a major source of provocations, necessitating an intensification of international control in this regard. As to the recent incidents that took place in the Tskhinvali region, the Georgian side strongly insists on the conduct of an objective investigation, with the participation of OSCE.

Once more, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia strongly demands that the Russian Federation put an immediate end to destructive activities in the Tskhinvali region and refrain from supplying arms to the separatist regimes.

At the same time, we urge the international community to make a due assessment of the Russian Federation's attempt to encroach upon Georgia's sovereign rights, interfere in its international affairs and infringe its territorial integrity.